

Minutes of the Environment and Energy Committee Meeting

Tuesday, May 9, 2017

The Environment and Energy Committee met on Tuesday, May 9, 2017 at 7:30 p.m. at the Village Hall. The meeting was the first formally convened in 2017. Marilyn Bracken chaired the meeting. Those present were Marea Hatzios (co-chair), Betsy Stephens, Ralph Stephens, Ollie Davidson, Diana Pape, and Gary Crockett (Board contact).

The Chair circulated an agenda (attached) and members of the Committee were called on to provide an update on each issue prior to its being discussed.

1. Noise and Pollution from Leaf Blowers and other lawn care machinery. It was proposed that a copy of the letter from the E&E Committee last fall that went out to each household in the Village on how to reduce noise pollution and harmful emissions from leaf blowers, including green lawn care alternatives, be reprinted in the June issue of the *Crier* as a reminder to residents. It was also agreed that a list of accredited green lawn care professionals be posted on the Village website, to give residents who contract out this service, more environmentally friendly options. (see also below under the new Montgomery County Pesticide Law).

2. Review of the New Owners Packet. The contents of the packet that goes out to new families moving in to the Village was reviewed to see if information on the Village's Recycling Program and on the fee for service Food Composting Program was adequate. There are about 20 individual info inserts in the packet, which may overwhelm new residents. It was suggested that the table of contents be highlighted as a stand-alone page in the packet so that new owners could see at a glance what is included and be more inclined to pick out the items of particular interest, for example info on composting, and follow up. The chair will pass this suggestion on to the Community Relations Committee.

The issue of how to expand residents' interest in composting was discussed, given that currently only about 40 households in the Village are using composting services like Compost Crew and Compost Cab (other residents may compost on their own, but we have little reliable data on this). One of the Co-Chairs (MH) brought up the possibility of creating an incentive to get more families on board through a partial subsidy of the monthly fee of \$20 (say \$10) paid for by the Village during a special 6 month promotion. The idea is to help residents on the fence about composting to actually try it, see how convenient it is, and decide to sign up permanently once the 6 month trial period is over. The objective would be to reach a participation rate of over 50% of households composting, at which point a case might be made to the Board that there is sufficient demand by residents for composting services that it might either include this as an additional service to residents paid for by the Village, or substitute one of the regular trash pick-ups days for food waste collection. This would be composted and returned to residents as organic fertilizer twice a year. Gary Crockett will explore this with the Board and in the meantime, circulate an article on the economics of composting in terms of GHG emissions reduction by a research group at Stanford University, which states that the rationale for composting cannot be made convincingly on the economics of avoided CO² emissions at the landfill. However, it was agreed that there may be other convincing reasons to compost, including that it recycles organic material and energy back into the local system, is a

convenient way to eliminate vermin and pests around garbage containers, and is consistent with people's notion of a more sustainable community.

3. Update on Healthy Lawns Legislation. Marilyn Bracken updated the Committee on the roll-out of the Montgomery County Healthy Lawns Bill 52-14. The Bill, which restricts the use of non-essential¹ pesticides on lawns, is now in effect on public greenspace. These restrictions will come into force for residential property on January 1, 2018. Chevy Chase Village is exempt from the ruling because it is an independent, incorporated village with its own local government. However, the Village may "opt in" to this legislation if it so chooses. A discussion followed in which it was decided that the Committee prepare a brief for the Board in the context of a public hearing on the legislation during the next several months. The brief would include details of which pesticides are banned and which are exempt and why, as well as other actions that will be required of both home owners and the Village to comply with the law if the Village chooses to opt in. There is a Green Business Directory on the Montgomery County Website which provides a list of green contractors for all sorts of services, including lawn and garden care. A link will be posted on the Village website to the Directory, as well as to user-friendly lists of native species (and the conditions and microclimates they are best suited for) to aid residents in selecting more pest resistant plants for their gardens.

4. Education and Outreach. There was a brief discussion on ideas for this year's Sustainable Living Lecture Series. Members agreed to get back to the Co-Chairs with suggestions. In the meantime, it was agreed that the Committee would reach out to the new Community Relations Committee Chair and to the Director of Chevy Chase at Home to see if we can coordinate our lecture series so as to not overwhelm residents with speakers' events and try to identify speakers with broad appeal to membership across these various groups. Marea Hatzios agreed to take the lead on this.

5. & 6. Broadening Residents' Participation in Environment and Energy Networks and in the work of the E&E Committee. The question was raised as to whether there may be ways to promote better networking among residents who might want to participate in more events around town related to the environment and sustainability. A number of these have taken place in relation to Earth Day, Science and Climate Change. It may be possible to post information on the Village website about other such events along with ride share information. As for recruiting younger members to the E&E Committee, it was agreed that every opportunity to do so would be made at community events, including lecture series, shredding events, etc. This continues to be a challenge for the Committee.

There was no New Business and the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

¹ "non-essential" for the control of invasive species or other pests, including noxious weeds, biting and stinging insects, and some others

Marea Hatzios Grant (co-chair)

Agenda - Environment and Energy Committee - May 9, 2017

1. Noise and Pollution from Leaf Blowers and other Lawn Machinery. Now that Spring is here, we might prepare a reminder for the June Crier regarding the suggestions that were made in the Board Letter about ways to reduce noise and pollution and work with their Lawn Service contractors
2. Review of the New Owners Packet re: the Village Recycling Program and Composting Program and any other information that might be included.
3. Update on the Healthy Lawns Legislation.
4. Education and Outreach-- Sustainable Living Series- New Speakers discussion.
5. Ways Village Residents can participate in Environmental and Energy Network Activities.
6. Recruitment of new Committee members
7. New Business